

# Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the Felsted Neighbourhood Plan Review

Environmental Report to accompany the Felsted Neighbourhood  
Plan Review to Regulation 14 consultation

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## Quality information

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# Non-Technical Summary

This report presents an assessment of the current (Regulation 14) version of the Felsted Neighbourhood Plan Review (FNPR) and 'reasonable alternatives'. Specifically:

- Part 1 deals with reasonable alternatives. Specifically, Section 5 defines reasonable alternatives before Section 6 presents an assessment and then Section 7 presents the response of the plan-makers to the assessment (and, in turn, an explanation of why the preferred option is supported, on balance, considering the assessment).
- Part 2 presents an assessment of the FNPR as a whole (where an assessment amounts to a discussion of 'significant effects' structured under a list of topic / objective headings, known as the SEA 'framework').
- Part 3 discusses next steps and specifically explains that following the current consultation the aim is for the FNPR to be subjected to an independent examination (overseen by an appointed examiner), as part of which account will be taken of this report and all consultation responses received.

With regards to the assessment of reasonable alternatives, the specific focus is on an assessment of two sites, both of which have the potential to provide housing land over the plan period. The following two reasonable alternatives are assessed:

- Option 1: Allocate the Water Tower site.
- Option 2: Allocate the Rayne Road site.

The plan-maker's response to the assessment is as follows:

*"The outcome of the FNPR Review Group's independent consultation event was inconclusive with very marginal numerical support for the Rayne Road site. However, the Review Group considered that though the late changes to the access to the Rayne Road site were acceptable and meant it had deserved further consideration as an alternative, the changes proposed did not sufficiently mitigate the impact of coalescence, the proposal was for significantly more homes than required in the Uttlesford District Council Local Plan and the density and design of the development was unattractive and inconsistent with the local area. Finally, the developers had made no offer of community gain. On balance the Review Group favoured the Garnetts Lane site."*

With regards to the assessment of the FNPR as a whole, the assessment predicts minor negative effects under most of the SEA themes. This is largely linked to the impact of development on the environment within Felsted, e.g., the risk of flooding, the potential increase of vehicles on the local road network and impacts to the character and quality of the landscape. However, it is noted that negative effects are largely mitigated through the policy provisions of the FNPR. Significant positive effects are considered likely for the communities, equality, inclusion and health SEA theme, given the focus of the FNPR on ensuring housing types and tenures are appropriate and maintaining and enhancing infrastructure provision within the neighbourhood area.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 AECOM has been commissioned to undertake an independent Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in support of the emerging Felsted Neighbourhood Plan Review (hereafter referred to as the 'FNPR').
- 1.1.2 The FNPR is being prepared under the Localism Act 2011 and the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, and in the context of the local planning framework for Uttlesford District Council. The review is being undertaken and prepared by residents of Felsted and Felsted Parish Council.
- 1.1.3 The designated neighbourhood area includes 13 distinct settlements. Felsted village, Causeway End, Bannister Green, Watch House Green and Cock Green are the larger settlements. These are surrounded by a number of hamlets, including (but not limited to) Willows Green and Gransmore Green.
- 1.1.4 Once adopted ('made' part of the development plan), the FNPR will hold material weight when deciding on planning applications in Felsted, alongside the latest adopted Local Plan for the Uttlesford district. The FNPR must be in 'general conformity' with the Local Plan.
- 1.1.5 SEA is a mechanism for considering and communicating the environmental and wider sustainable development effects of an emerging plan, and alternatives, with a view to minimising adverse effects and maximising the positives. SEA is a requirement for the FNPR (following a 'screening' process).

## 1.2 SEA explained

- 1.2.1 It is a requirement that SEA is undertaken in line with the procedures prescribed by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, which transposed into national law EU Directive 2001/42/EC on SEA.
- 1.2.2 In line with the Regulations, a report (known as the Environmental Report) must be published for consultation alongside the draft plan that "*identifies, describes and evaluates*" the likely significant effects of implementing "*the plan, and reasonable alternatives*". The report must then be considered, alongside consultation responses, when finalising the plan.
- 1.2.3 More specifically, the report must answer the following three questions:
  1. What has plan-making / SEA involved up to this point?
    - Including in relation to 'reasonable alternatives'.
  2. What are the SEA findings at this stage?
    - i.e., in relation to the draft plan.
  3. What happens next?

## 1.3 This Environmental Report

- 1.3.1 This report is the Environmental Report for the FNPR. It is published alongside the 'pre-submission' version of the Plan, under Regulation 14 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations (2012, as amended).
- 1.3.2 This report essentially answers questions 1, 2 and 3 above in turn, to provide the required information. Each question is answered within a discrete 'part' of the report.
- 1.3.3 However, before answering the first question, two initial questions are answered to further set the scene:
  - What is the plan seeking to achieve?
  - What is the scope of the SEA?

## 2. The plan scope

### 2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 This section considered the strategic planning policy context provided by the local development framework for Uttlesford District Council, before then presenting the vision and objectives of the draft FNPR. The neighbourhood area is shown below in **Figure 1**.



**Figure 1: Felsted neighbourhood area**

## 2.2 Context to plan preparation

- 2.2.1 The strategic local policy context is set through the Uttlesford Local Development Framework, this is predominantly made up of the Uttlesford Local Plan, adopted in 2005<sup>1</sup> but it also contains policies from Essex's Minerals Plan (2014)<sup>2</sup> and Essex and Southend-on-Sea Waste Local Plan (2017)<sup>3</sup>. In the context of Felsted, it also contains the adopted neighbourhood plan from 2020<sup>4</sup> which sets out allocations and policies for the neighbourhood area to which this FNPR will follow on from.
- 2.2.2 The FNPR is being prepared in the context of the emerging Uttlesford Local Plan, which sets out the framework for future development in the district up until 2041<sup>5</sup>. This aims to replace the adopted 2005 Local Plan. A Sustainability Appraisal has been carried out for this plan as well as a Habitat Regulation Assessment in accordance with the Habitats Directive.
- 2.2.3 The spatial strategy within the emerging local plan establishes a spatial framework under Core Policy 3 (Settlement Hierarchy), where Felsted is identified as a 'Larger Village'. Reflecting this, the settlement has been allocated a residual housing requirement of 95 (reduced from 104) under Core Policy 19 (Rural Area Housing Requirement Figures). This number was derived from an overall 2021-2041 housing requirement minus extant permissions (commitments) and completions between April 2021 and 2024.

## 2.3 Vision of the plan

- 2.3.1 The vision has remained unchanged from the made Felsted Neighbourhood Plan. It is as follows:
  1. Over the Plan period Felsted will continue to be a special place to live in a rural setting.
  2. Our village amenities will have been expanded and enhanced, particularly our primary health care and village shopping. We will have a new larger community hall providing a focus for Parish public and private events.
  3. Congestion at peak times will have been eased and pedestrians will be able to move around the village centre and our schools in safety and comfort.
  4. The setting of listed buildings in the village centre along with Holy Cross Church will have been protected in an enhanced public space, which will have created a clearly defined historic centre, articulating to residents and visitors the value importance of this ancient settlement recorded in the Domesday Book.
  5. The dispersed nature of the Parish of Felsted with its 15 individual Greens and hamlets will remain. This Plan will have ensured the character and identity of this place and its ecology are protected from housing and infrastructure changes in the surrounding area.

<sup>1</sup> Uttlesford District Council (2005): [Uttlesford Local Plan 2005](#)

<sup>2</sup> Essex County Council (2014): [Essex Minerals Local Plan](#)

<sup>3</sup> Essex County Council and Southend-on-Sea City Council (2017): [Essex and Southend-on-SEA Waste Local Plan](#)

<sup>4</sup> Felsted Parish Council (2020): [Felsted Neighbourhood Plan 2018 - 2033](#)

<sup>5</sup> Uttlesford District Council (2025): [What is the New Local Plan?](#)

6. Felsted will have met housing needs and supported additional market housing development where it supports provision of parish amenities and facilitates continuity of residence in the Parish.
7. Local employment will have been encouraged through supporting small business development.
8. Our schools will continue to be emblematic of educational excellence, meet emerging demands and will play an active role in the community.
9. The natural environment will have been protected and enhanced and green infrastructure delivered.
10. New technology will have been used to provide information to users of footpaths and bridleways about the historical setting of the countryside, its wildlife and what might be expected to be seen at any given location.”

## 3. The SEA scope

### 3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 The aim here is to introduce the reader to the scope of the SEA, i.e., the sustainability topics and objectives that should be a focus of the assessment of the plan and reasonable alternatives. Further information, including the overarching policy review and baseline information that has supported the development of key sustainability issues and objectives, is presented in the Felsted Neighbourhood Plan SEA Scoping Report, produced by Uttlesford District Council in 2024<sup>6</sup>

### 3.2 Consultation

3.2.1 The SEA Regulations require that “*when deciding on the scope and level of detail of the information that must be included in the report, the responsible authority shall consult the consultation bodies*”.

3.2.2 In England, the consultation bodies are Natural England, the Environmental Agency, and Historic England<sup>7</sup>. As such, these authorities were consulted from 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2025 and 28<sup>th</sup> July 2025. Historic England highlighted some context documents, which have been used to inform this Environmental Report.

### 3.3 SEA framework

3.3.1 The SEA scope is summarised in a list of themes and objectives, known as the SEA framework. These draw on the key sustainability issues identified through scoping.

3.3.2 Table 1 overleaf presents the SEA framework.

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<sup>6</sup> Uttlesford District Council (2025): Felsted Neighbourhood Plan Draft Strategic Environmental Assessment Scoping Report.

<sup>7</sup> In line with Article 6(3) of the SEA Directive, these consultation bodies were selected because ‘by reason of their specific environmental responsibilities, [they] are likely to be concerned by the environmental effects of implementing plans and programme’.

**Table 1: SEA framework**

<b>SEA theme</b>	<b>SEA objective</b>
Biodiversity	Maintain and enhance the extent and quality of biodiversity and geodiversity sites and networks within and surrounding the neighbourhood area. Account for recreational pressure on internationally and nationally designated sites as a key issue.
Climate Change – Adaptation	Increase resilience to the effects of climate change, including increased flooding, droughts and heatwaves. Explore options for natural flood risk management.
Climate Change – Mitigation	Reduce per capita (i.e., per person) contribution to climate change, with a focus on both built environment and transport emissions.
Communities, equality, inclusion and health	Support high quality living environments and strong communities, including good relations fostered between people and groups. Support healthy lifestyles for all groups, reducing health inequalities and delivering positive outcomes, including via access to services / facilities and green infrastructure / open space (including with a focus on key groups such as people with restricted mobility and low-income households) and enabling active travel.
Historic Environment	Conserve and enhance valued assets, including their setting, and also conserve / enhance historic character at a range of scales.
Land, soils and resources	Ensure the efficient and effective use of land, including accounting for the grade of productive agricultural land.
Landscape	Protect and enhance the character and quality of the diverse landscapes at a range of scales, e.g., river valleys, chalk influenced landscapes, ancient, farmed landscapes, wooded landscapes and settlement gaps. Support strategic green / blue infrastructure, including long distance walk / cycle routes.
Transport and Accessibility	Promote modal shift away from the private car and reduce the need to travel, whilst protecting residents and the natural environment from the impacts of congestion, air pollution and noise pollution. Preserve areas of rural tranquillity.

## Part 1: Work to date

## 4. Introduction

### 4.1 Overview

- 4.1.1 Whilst work on the FNPR has been underway for some time, the aim here is not to provide a comprehensive explanation of all the work carried out to date, but rather to explain work undertaken to develop and appraise reasonable alternatives at this stage.
- 4.1.2 More specifically, this part of the report presents information on the consideration given to reasonable alternative approaches to addressing a particular issue that is of central importance to the FNPR, namely the location of land for residential growth.

### 4.2 Why focus on growth?

- 4.2.1 The decision was taken to develop and assess reasonable alternatives in relation to the matter of where to focus growth in the neighbourhood area, given the following considerations:
  - The location of housing growth will be a key interest amongst residents and other stakeholders, given the environmental constraints in the Felsted neighbourhood area.
  - The delivery of new homes is most likely to have a significant effect compared to the other proposals within the FNPR. National Planning Practice Guidance is clear that SEA should focus on matters likely to give rise to significant effects.

### 4.3 Structure of this part of the report

- 4.3.1 This part of the report is structured as follows:
  - Chapter 5 sets out the outline reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with.
  - Chapter 6 provides an appraisal of the alternatives; and
  - Chapter 7 explains the reasons for selecting the preferred option, considering the appraisal.

# 5. Establishing reasonable alternatives

## 5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 This chapter sets out the outline reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with through the SEA process, followed by the appraisal findings.

## 5.2 Strategic factors

5.2.1 The aim of this section of the report is to explore strategic factors (issues, options etc) with a bearing on the definition of reasonable growth scenarios. Specifically, this section of the report explores:

- Quantum – how much growth is needed (regardless of capacity to provide for it)?
- Planning policy – what policies are already in place locally that development will need to consider?

### Quantum

5.2.2 The current Uttlesford Local Plan was adopted in 2005 and provides the basis for all planning decisions within the district. Within this Local Plan, Felsted is not provided with a housing figure.

5.2.3 Uttlesford District Council is currently reviewing and updating the Local Plan. The emerging Uttlesford Local Plan 2021-2041 is currently at examination; the latest update being that the Inspectors' Post Hearing Letter was published on 6<sup>th</sup> August 2025<sup>8</sup>.

5.2.4 The emerging Uttlesford Local Plan 2021-2041 recognises Felsted as a 'Larger Village' and identifies a residual housing target of 104 dwellings across the plan period, as of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024, more recently reduced to 95 dwellings.

### Adopted Felsted Neighbourhood Plan

5.2.5 The current Felsted Neighbourhood Plan was formally 'made' by Uttlesford District Council on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2020. It sets out a vision for the future of the area and planning policies which are used to determine planning applications locally. The themes of the policies in the current Felsted Neighbourhood Plan include protecting the historic village centre; village amenities; developing our schools; meeting housing needs; integrity, character and heritage; supporting the rural economy; and countryside and wildlife.

<sup>8</sup> Local Plan Services (2025): [Uttlesford Local Plan Examination](#)

## 5.3 Site options

5.3.1 Having given 'top down' consideration to strategic factors, the next step is to give a 'bottom up' consideration to the site options that are available and in contention for allocation, and which can be thought of as the building blocks for growth options.

### Key considerations for the FNPR

5.3.2 The FNPR Review Group have decided to allocate housing sites to not only meet current housing demand in the Felsted neighbourhood area, but to also meet the anticipated future need, and maximise the benefits additional housing growth could bring. This includes securing land for social housing through the Felsted Community Trust.

5.3.3 It is noted that the community is clear in its concern that site allocations should not lead to an immediate further surge in development and that sites and developers should, where possible, be identified that are willing to spread development over the plan period. This has proved problematic in Felsted; the delivery of market housing is driven by demand, and the phasing of relatively small developments is uneconomic. Additionally, it can make delivering community benefits more difficult, as phased development may not necessarily have the funds to contribute to community infrastructure in a timely manner.

5.3.4 A key document that has informed the site selection process is the Felsted Heritage and Character Assessment<sup>9</sup>. This report presents a summary of the history and character of Felsted, identifies what is special and distinctive about the neighbourhood area in relation to the landscape, and helps to guide development design so that growth responds appropriately to the local character and history of the neighbourhood area whilst not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation. The report identifies five distinct local character areas within Felsted, which all have unique positive aspects of character, issues to be addressed, and sensitivities to change. The report concludes that there are general principles to consider when defining policies with respect to heritage and character:

- New development should respond to the local settlement pattern and scale and diversity of existing development.
- New agricultural buildings should be integrated into the landscape with boundary vegetation, including a good range of species to best build resilience to the threat of climate change and increase biosecurity.
- The retention and reinstatement of triangular 'greens' at the centre of the settlement should be integrated into development proposals.
- Article 4 Directions, when applied to individual properties, can be an appropriate means to manage change by restricting permitted development rights to avoid changes which would erode local distinctiveness.

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<sup>9</sup> AECOM (2017): [Felsted Heritage and Character Assessment](#)

The report also provides specific considerations to the distinct character areas. This is expected to inform where development could be focused within the Felsted neighbourhood area.

5.3.5 Sites have again been considered and objectively assessed for their suitability, sustainability, deliverability, achievability and availability and their contribution to the community. The potential sites were initially identified from UDC's 2015 Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA). The assessment provided by the SHLAA formed the basis for the Review Group's Site Assessment work. (The sites remained unaltered in the 2023 Draft HELAA and in the final June 2024 HELAA.) Each site assessment included the UDC Status comment and where relevant the comments submitted to UDC by Felsted Parish Council.

## Site identification

5.3.6 Felsted Parish Council decided to take responsibility of planning for their identified housing needs themselves, and as such have two years from the adoption of the emerging Local Plan (expected in early 2026) for the FNPR to be adopted.

5.3.7 In recent years, and in the absence of a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites (a requirement for the NPPF), there has been an increasing level of interest and speculative development proposals coming forward, particularly in Felsted which has a very strong housing market. The emerging Uttlesford Local Plan 2021-2041 has imposed an additional and unexpected housing allocation (to the 'made' Neighbourhood Plan). The FNPR is anticipated to help ensure development is planned and contributes towards the infrastructure priorities identified by the community, rather than being unplanned and speculative.

5.3.8 Following public consultation, the FNPR Review Group have identified the Sunnybrook Farm II site as a preferred housing allocation site. This builds on the existing allocation of the Sunnybrook Farm site in the 'made' Felsted Neighbourhood Plan (FNP) – which is now fully built out. The site has been identified for 17 dwellings; 12 bungalows, 4 three-bedroom homes, and a single four-bed dwelling and development could result in the donation of land to the south and adjacent to Braintree Road to the Felsted Community Land Trust. This is anticipated to be reserved for the relocation of the village shop and post office – but after five years, will be reconsidered based on the provision of amenities in the neighbourhood area.

5.3.9 The FNPR recognises that this is effectively an extension of the site allocated in the 'made' Felsted Neighbourhood Plan, and that a planning application could be made for the site before the FNPR is completed. In this case, the site will still be recognised as contributing to the overall housing requirement for Felsted.

5.3.10 The FNPR Review Group have identified a further site that could be allocated for housing development to meet the residual needs (alongside Sunnybrook Farm II). The land north of Garnetts Lane, Chestnut Walk and Stebbing Road (also known as the Water Tower site) is a decent size and is centrally located within the neighbourhood area.

5.3.11 However, there has been local concern over access to the site – linked to both the construction phase and the lifetime of the development. There has also been concern in the community over heavy lorries moving through the centre of the village and using Garnetts Lane for access during the construction phase, as this would disturb the tranquillity of the settlement. To remedy this, there have been discussions over a haul route – which would likely reduce vehicular traffic on the roads.

5.3.12 Originally there were no alternatives to the Water Tower site; however, a site previously discounted by the FNPR Review Group and Uttlesford District Council over access issues has now had these issues resolved. The developer of the Rayne Road site has purchased a house and grounds on the boundary of the site that would now allow for suitable ingress and egress to and from the site. Nonetheless, there is still community concern over the site leading to coalescence between the settlements of Bannister Green and Watch House Green.

5.3.13 Both the Water Tower site and the Rayne Road site have planning applications in place outside of the FNPR process; the Water Tower site for up to 70 dwellings<sup>10</sup>, and the Rayne Road site for up to 100 dwellings<sup>11</sup>. The concept masterplans for these sites are depicted in Figures 2 and 3.

5.3.14 After allocating the Sunnybrook Farm II site and considering existing commitments and completions within Felsted since 2024, the residual housing need to be met through the FNPR is 71 dwellings; as such, the Rayne Road site would deliver more housing than what is needed, which is unlikely to be supported by the community.

<sup>10</sup> Uttlesford District Council (2025): [UTT/25/1929/OP | Outline planning application for erection of up to 70 no. dwellings served by vehicular and pedestrian accesses, complete with parking provision, drainage attenuation, public open space, landscaping and related infrastructure and works: All matters reserved except for primary means of vehicular and pedestrian access \(to exclude internal roads and footways not covered herein\). | Land North Of Garnetts Lane And Stebbing Road Felsted Essex](#)

<sup>11</sup> Uttlesford District Council (2025): [UTT/25/2498/OP | Outline application with all matters reserved except access for the erection of up to 100 dwellings, associated landscaping and open space, with access from Rayne Road | Land North Of Rayne Road Bannister Green Felsted](#)



Figure 2: Concept masterplan for the Water Tower site



Figure 3: Concept masterplan for the Rayne Road site

## 5.5 Reasonable alternatives

5.5.1 After allocating the Sunnybrook Farm II site, and considering existing commitments and completions within Felsted since 2024, the residual housing need to be met through the FNPR is 71 dwellings. There are two potential sites that could meet this need. These have been progressed as reasonable alternatives:

- Option 1: Allocate the Water Tower site.
- Option 2: Allocate the Rayne Road site.

# 6. Assessment of reasonable alternatives

## 6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 This section presents an assessment of the reasonable alternatives introduced above.

6.1.2 Utilising the SEA framework of objectives and assessment questions developed during the earlier scoping stage of the SEA process, the appraisal has been presented under eight SEA themes as follows:

- Biodiversity.
- Climate change adaptation.
- Climate change mitigation.
- Communities, equality, inclusion and health.
- Historic environment.
- Land, soil and resources.
- Landscape.
- Transport and accessibility.

6.1.3 The appraisal considers the relative sustainability merits of the two options. Findings are presented as a commentary on effects. To support the appraisal findings, the options have been ranked in terms of their sustainability performance against the relevant SEA theme. It is anticipated that this will provide the reader with a likely indication of the relative performance of the options in relation to each theme.

6.1.4 The assessment takes a ‘policy off’ approach, assessing the potential effects of the scenarios prior to any FNPR policy mitigation being implemented. This includes design stipulations included in the design and access statements for the sites under their individual planning applications.

## 6.2 Assessment of the reasonable alternatives

**Table 2: Conclusions of the reasonable alternatives assessment**

SEA Theme		Option 1: the Water Tower site	Option 2: Rayne Road site
Biodiversity	Significant effect?	No	No
	Ranking	1	2
Climate change adaptation	Significant effect?	No	No
	Ranking	1	2
Climate change mitigation	Significant effect?	No	No
	Ranking	1	2
Communities, equality, inclusion, and health	Significant effect?	Yes - positive	Yes – positive
	Ranking	1	2
Historic environment	Significant effect?	Yes – negative	No
	Ranking	2	1
Land, soil and resources	Significant effect?	Yes – negative	No
	Ranking	2	1
Landscape	Significant effect?	Yes – negative	No
	Ranking	2	1
Transport and accessibility	Significant effect?	No	No
	Ranking	=	=

### Biodiversity

6.2.1 Neither option would deliver growth within proximity to a European designated site for biodiversity, nor would they deliver growth within proximity to nationally or locally designated sites for biodiversity. However, it is noted that both options would deliver development partially (Option 1) or wholly (Option 2) within the Zone of Influence for the Essex Coast Recreational Disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy. As such, development under either option would be expected to provide the required financial contributions.

6.2.2 In relation to Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Priority Habitats, development through Option 1 would not result in the direct loss of important habitats, nor would it be located within proximity to an important habitat area. In contrast, whilst development through Option 2 would not overlap with an area of BAP Priority Habitat, growth would be delivered within 30m west of an area of deciduous woodland. It is possible that growth through Option 2 could impact upon the biodiversity value of this habitat, for example through increased light pollution and noise disturbance. However, given that there is

existing development around the habitat, it is considered that negative effects would be minimal.

6.2.3 Overall, Option 1 is considered most favourable in relation to biodiversity, given that development of the site is unlikely to have adverse effects on nationally and locally designated sites and habitats. Option 2 is the least favourable, reflecting its proximity to an area of deciduous woodland, and the potential for increased development in this area to negatively impact upon biodiversity value and connectivity. However, these differences are marginal. Overall, broadly neutral effects are considered likely for Option 1, and minor negative effects for Option 2 (pre-mitigation). If Option 2 were progressed, it is recommended that site specific policy seeks to utilise net gains to benefit the existing nearby habitat.

## Climate change adaptation

6.2.4 Neither option would deliver growth in areas at risk of fluvial flooding; nor would development be delivered in proximity to such areas at risk.

6.2.5 In relation to surface water flood risk, both options would deliver growth in areas that experience low to high risk. However, it is considered that growth through Option 1 would include areas at risk constrained to the eastern development boundary. This could likely be readily mitigated through development. Comparatively, surface water flood risk on the site proposed through Option 2 is more extensive – with areas on the northern, western and southern boundaries at risk and within the central area of the site itself. As such, it is likely that mitigation requirements would be more extensive. It is noted that both options could negatively impact on surface water flood risk on the adjacent roads – Stebbing Road for Option 1 and Watch House Green for Option 2.

6.2.6 Overall, Option 1 is ranked most favourably in relation to climate change adaptation. This reflects its reduced surface water flood risk in comparison to Option 2. Minor negative effects are considered likely through both options, reflecting their potential to impact upon surface water flooding on the adjacent road network (pre-mitigation).

## Climate change mitigation

6.2.7 Development through either option will lead to an inevitable increase in greenhouse gas emissions originating from the Felsted neighbourhood area. This is due to an intensification of the built environment and additional emissions, largely linked to domestic activities and transport associated with new residents. However, it is considered that Option 2 could lead to greater emissions than Option 1, reflecting the larger level of proposed development.

6.2.8 Additionally, it is noted that both options present relatively equal opportunities to engage with active and sustainable transportation. This reflects their potential to support walking and bus service access.

6.2.9 Overall, Option 1 is ranked more favourably than Option 2 in relation to climate change mitigation. Whilst both options have relatively equal potential to support active and sustainable transportation uptake, the lower level of development under Option 1 is likely to have slightly less impacts in relation

to emissions in comparison to Option 2. Minor negative effects are considered likely for both options.

## Communities, equality, inclusion and health

6.2.10 Both options are likely to bring forward benefits in relation to communities, equality, inclusion and health. This reflects that both options seek to deliver housing development to contribute to the identified housing need in the neighbourhood area. However, there is a level of uncertainty over Option 2 in this respect. Option 2 would deliver over and above the identified local need, which could lead to surplus housing being available and more people moving into the neighbourhood area. Whilst this could be a positive in relation to this theme (as it would likely help to support a vibrant community and could deliver more affordable homes), delivering over the identified housing need in Felsted is not likely to be supported by the existing community. This is due to concern linked to impacts of large-scale development on the rural character of the neighbourhood area and its settlements.

6.2.11 Additionally, it is recognised that growth through Option 1 would be located within closer proximity to a range of services and facilities in comparison to Option 2. This includes (but is not limited to) Felsted School, the memorial hall, the public house, a café and a restaurant, and allotment space. This could help to encourage a more cohesive community, as development would have better access to infrastructure that allows for residents to come together and interact. In comparison, Option 2 would be within closer proximity to the Felsted Primary School than Option 1. Notably, Option 2 could also contribute to coalescence between the settlements of Bannister Green and Watch House Green.

6.2.12 Overall, it is concluded that both options would lead to significant positive effects in relation to the communities, equality, inclusion and health SEA theme. This reflects that both options would deliver additional housing to meet the identified local need in Felsted. However, there is a level of uncertainty around Option 2, given that it would deliver over and above the identified local need and would go against the wishes of the community and could contribute to coalescence between two settlement areas. Given this, and the fact that Option 2 is further away from existing community infrastructure within Felsted, Option 1 is ranked most favourably.

## Historic environment

6.2.13 Neither option would bring forward development within proximity to a designated historic asset or feature, and as such the settings and significance of individual structures is anticipated to remain the same.

6.2.14 However, Option 1 would deliver growth within proximity to the Felsted Conservation Area – which is located within proximity to the site to the south. As such, there is potential for development through Option 1 to negatively impact upon northward views from the designated area. Development through Option 1 could also have a further negative effect on the setting and significance of the conservation area, through changes to its surroundings and the way it is interpreted in the wider historic landscape of Felsted and Uttlesford district.

6.2.15 Overall, Option 2 is found to be more favourable in relation to the historic environment. This reflects the distance of the site from designated heritage assets, areas and features, and its subsequent low potential to adversely affect the historic environment within Felsted. As such, neutral effects are considered likely pre-mitigation. Option 1 is concluded to be the least favourable, given its proximity to the northern extent of the Felsted Conservation Area and its potential to impact upon views from the designated area. This conclusion also reflects the potential for development in this location to negatively impact upon the historic setting and significance of the conservation area. Significant negative effects are considered likely for Option 1 pre-mitigation.

## Land, soil and resources

6.2.16 Both options would result in the development of greenfield land in Felsted – and as such, will result in a level of soil resource loss.

6.2.17 In relation to their agricultural classification, Option 1 would focus development within an area of Grade 2 provisional agricultural land – which is considered to have a higher likelihood of being best and most versatile and supporting agricultural activity. In contrast, growth through Option 2 would focus development in an area of provisional Grade 3 agricultural land classification. Whilst it is not possible to determine whether this is Grade 3a (which has potential of being best and most versatile) or Grade 3b, it is considered likely that the quality of the underlying soils is lower than that of Option 1. As such, Option 2 is more favourable in relation to soil and land resources.

6.2.18 It is noted that neither option is located within proximity to a watercourse; whilst they are both located within different catchments (Option 1 within the Stebbing Brook Water Body catchment, and Option 2 within the Ter Water Body catchment), their likelihood of impacting on water quality is considered to be low.

6.2.19 Overall, Option 2 is considered to be the most favourable option in relation to land, soil and resources. This is due to focusing development on a site that has a lower potential of supporting agricultural activity. Given that Option 1 is underlain by provisional Grade 2 agricultural land, there is a greater potential to result in the loss of productive soils, which cannot be mitigated. Minor negative effects are considered likely for Option 2; and significant negative effects are considered for Option 1.

## Landscape

6.2.20 Both options would deliver growth within the same National Character Area (South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland) and within the same Local Character Area as defined by Uttlesford District Council (Felsted Farmland Plateau). As such, it is likely that both options have similar landscape characters, qualities, and features – and are likely to share similar issues and opportunities.

6.2.21 According to the Felsted Heritage and Character Assessment 2017, Option 1 is located within the Felsted Arable Farmland character area, which is defined by its arable landscape and features, isolated farmsteads and smaller sized settlements, and tranquillity. Option 2 is located within the

Felsted Rural Greens character area, which is defined by its nucleated settlements stretching along the local roads, post-war housing developments interspersed with occasional historic properties, and limited views.

6.2.22 Based on this assessment, it could be argued that Option 2 would be more favourable than Option 1 in relation to the landscape theme, as development through Option 2 would not result in large-scale changes to the character. This reflects that the landscape character area that Option 2 sits within is more developed than the landscape character area that Option 1 sits within, and views are more limited. This could result in new development through Option 2 having a reduced visual impact in the wider landscape. Comparatively, larger-scale growth through Option 1 has the potential to impact upon the tranquillity of the area, and could lead to visual changes, given that there is limited development in the Felsted Arable Farmland character area.

6.2.23 Overall, Option 2 is found to be the most favourable option in relation to landscape, due to its likely reduced impacts in comparison to Option 1. This leads back to the different landscape character areas identified through the Felsted Heritage and Landscape Assessment 2017, which indicates that growth through Option 2 would likely have a reduced visual impact on the surrounding area, linked to limited views and existing development. It is considered that significant negative effects could be anticipated through Option 1, given development would adversely impact upon the local character area. Minor negative effects are likely through Option 2.

## Transport and accessibility

6.2.24 Both options would deliver growth adjacent to the local road network; Option 1 onto the unclassified Garnetts Lane, and Option 2 onto the Class III Rayne Road. Both are likely to facilitate vehicular access to and from the sites.

6.2.25 With regards to sustainable transportation, neither option would deliver development adjacent to a bus stop. However, both options would deliver growth within walking distance to bus stops along Braintree Road (Option 1) and Rayne Road (Option 2).

6.2.26 In relation to active transportation opportunities, Option 1 would likely facilitate pedestrian access to and from the site, due to pavement provision along Garnetts Lane, which connects to Braintree Road to allow for access to the village of Felsted. Additionally, Option 2 would likely facilitate safe pedestrian access to and from the site, due to the pavement provision on Rayne Road and leading into Watch House Green. It is also noted that both options have access to public rights of way (PRoW). Option 1 has two footpaths intersecting the area in a north to south direction, and is in proximity to a further two footpaths to the north-west.

6.2.27 Overall, both options are ranked equally, reflecting their equal opportunities to encourage an uptake in active and sustainable transportation. Both options are anticipated to facilitate vehicular and pedestrian access to and from the proposed sites. At this time, minor negative effects are concluded likely for both options – reflecting their likelihood of increasing private vehicles on the local road network, associated with new housing development.

## 6.3 Conclusions

- 6.3.1 Overall, both options have the potential to lead to significant positive effects through the delivery of new homes (including affordable homes) to meet the identified needs. Option 1 is the FNPR Group's preferred option for allocation as it does not exceed housing needs. The additional homes delivered under Option 2 are considered likely to be more contentious with the local community and could contribute to coalescence between two settlement areas.
- 6.3.2 However, Option 1 is also noted for potential significant negative effects in relation to the historic environment, soil resources, and landscape. Effective mitigation would be required to reduce the extent of effects, though any loss of productive best and most versatile agricultural land would be permanent.
- 6.3.3 No significant effects are anticipated under Option 2, or for either option in relation to biodiversity, climate change, and transport.

## 7. Preferred approach for the FNPR

- 7.1.1 29 sites in Felsted that had been originally submitted in the SHLAA were assessed by the Review Group. Of the 29, 17 sites were quickly eliminated. Some had already been developed, some were no longer available, and a small number were plainly unsuitable. The remaining 12 sites were made subject of a public consultation with information about the sites.
- 7.1.2 From the outcome of the public consultation, the FNPR Review Group initially identified three sites. However, one site was quickly eliminated as it was identified (by Uttlesford District Council) as an 'employment site'.
- 7.1.3 An additional site at Sunnybrook Farm was identified as providing capacity for 17 new homes and an important site for the relocation of the village shop and post office.
- 7.1.4 The Garnetts Lane site (Option 1) was identified as being able to meet the residual requirement from the allocated 95 dwellings, (circa 70 homes) offering sustainable development, and meeting identified housing need with the minimum impact on the rural character of the parish. The parish also intended to pursue the development of 6 social housing units as part of any development. The homes developed are intended to be owned by the Felsted Community Trust and managed to provide opportunities for people with local connections who are otherwise unable to afford to live in Felsted.
- 7.1.5 Following public consultation, the site at Rayne Road (Option 2), which had not been supported by the FNPR Review Group due to poor access and the impact on coalescence between Watch House and Bannister Greens, was promoted by developers with improved access. However, the issue of coalescences continued. The proposal, for up to 100 new homes, was for more homes than the parish was required to accept and the style and density of the development was not considered compatible with other housing in the area.
- 7.1.6 However, as both the Garnetts Lane and the Rayne Road proposals had been promoted by the developer's agents and public consultations held, the FNPR Review Group considered it prudent to hold a further independent consultation on the two sites and to invite preferences through the use of a 'ballot'. However, it was noted by the FNPR Review Group that the developer's event promoting the Garnetts Lane site had included reference to a 'haul Road' which has not been repeated in the planning application.
- 7.1.7 The outcome of the FNPR Review Group's independent consultation event was inconclusive with very marginal numerical support for the Rayne Road site. However, the Review Group considered that though the late changes to the access to the Rayne Road site were acceptable and meant it had deserved further consideration as an alternative, the changes proposed did not sufficiently mitigate the impact of coalescence, the proposal was for significantly more homes than required in the Uttlesford District Council Local Plan and the density and design of the development was unattractive and inconsistent with the local area. Additionally, it is considered that development of the Rayne Road site would cause unacceptable coalescence, which would likely be in contention with the provisions of Core

**Policy 41 of the emerging Uttlesford Local Plan. Finally, the developers had made no offer of community gain. On balance the Review Group favoured the Garnetts Lane site.**

## **Part 2: What are the SEA findings at this stage?**

## 8. Introduction

### 8.1 Overview

8.1.1 The aim of this part of the Environmental Report is to present appraisal findings and recommendations in relation to the current Regulation 14 'pre-submission' version of the FNPR. This chapter presents:

- An appraisal of the current version of the FNPR under the eight SEA themes that form the SEA Framework (see Table 1).
- The overall conclusions at this current stage and recommendations for the next stage of plan-making

### 8.2 FNPR policies

8.2.1 The draft FNPR contains 15 policies. These are listed below.

**Table 3: FNPR policies**

Policy reference	Policy name
FELREV/VA3	Infrastructure Priorities
FELREV/SC1	Supporting out Schools
FELREV/SC2	Felsted School
FELREV/SC7	Felsted Primary School
FELREV/ERO1	Regenerative Opportunities
FELREV/HN1	Meeting Housing Needs
FELREV/HN9	Sunnybrook Farm II
FELREV/HN10	Larn north of Garnetts Lane, Chestnut Walk and Stebbing Road (land adjacent the Water Tower)
FELREV/HVC1	Historic Village Centre
FELREV/ICH1	High Quality Design
FELREV/ICH2	Signage Pollution
FELREV/ICH4	Avoiding Coalescence
FELREV/CW1	Landscape and Countryside Character
FELREV/CW2	Nature Area including Felsted Fen
FELREV/RE1	Renewable Energy Infrastructure

## 8.4 Methodology

- 8.4.1 For each theme, 'significant' effects of the Regulation 14 version of the FNPR on the baseline are predicated and evaluated. Account is taken of the criteria presented within Schedule 2 of the Regulations. For example, account is taken of the probability, duration, frequency, and reversibility of the effects as far as possible. These effect 'characteristics' will be described within the assessment, as appropriate.
- 8.4.2 Every effort is made to identify / evaluate effects accurately; however, this is inherently challenging given the high-level nature of the FNPR. The ability to predict effects accurately is also limited by understanding of the baseline and the nature of future planning applications. Because of the uncertainties involved, there is a need to exercise caution when identifying and evaluating significant effects to ensure all assumptions are explained. In many instances it is not possible to predict significant effects, but it is possible to comment on merits (or otherwise) in more general terms.
- 8.4.3 Finally, it is important to note that effects are predicted taking account of the criteria presented within Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations. So, for example, account is taken of the probability, duration, frequency, and reversibility of effects as far as possible. These effect 'characteristics' are described within the assessment as appropriate.

## 9. Assessment of the plan

### 9.1 Introduction

9.1.1 The assessment is presented below under eight topic headings, reflecting the established assessment framework (see Chapter 3). A final section, Chapter 10, then presents overall conclusions.

### 9.2 Biodiversity

9.2.1 Whilst there are no European designated sites for biodiversity within or in proximity to the neighbourhood area, it is noted that the eastern part of the neighbourhood area is within the Essex Coast Recreated Disturbance Avoidances and Mitigation Strategy (RAMS) Zone of Influence (ZOI). Both allocated sites fall wholly or partially within the ZOI and will be required to contribute a tariff per net new dwelling, in order to protect the Blackwater Estuary Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar site. This is in line with the associated Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for the designation<sup>12</sup>. Policy FELREV/HN9 recognises the overlap with the ZOI and includes the need for development of the Sunnybrook Farm site to either provide the financial contribution or be accompanied by a project level Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) to ensure development would not have an adverse effect on the integrity of the designation. However, Policy FELREV/HN10 does not make the same stipulations for the Land North of Garnetts Lane, Chestnut Walk and Stebbing Road site – despite its partial overlap with the ZOI. It is recommended this policy is revisited and updated to include similar considerations.

9.2.2 Additionally, there are no nationally designated sites for biodiversity within the Felsted neighbourhood area; whilst there are two within 5km of the neighbourhood area boundaries, there is no overlap with the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) Impact Risk Zones for the types of development likely to come forward through the site allocations and the wider FNPR. It is recognised that whilst there are local nature reserves within the neighbourhood area, these are largely removed from existing and allocated development. Additionally, Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Priority Habitat coverage is fragmented across the neighbourhood area – consisting of deciduous woodland, coastal and floodplain grazing marsh, traditional orchards, and good quality semi-improved grassland.

9.2.3 Whilst Policy FELREV/HN9 does not make specific biodiversity stipulations in relation to the Sunnybrook Farm site allocation, Policy FELREV/HN10 does include biodiversity considerations for the Land North of Garnetts Lane, Chestnut Walk and Stebbing Road site allocation. It requires development to avoid the unnecessary removal of hedgerows and replace hedgerows where their removal is required. This is likely to safeguard biodiversity connectivity within the site and in the wider area, by protecting features that likely contribute to the biodiversity network and allow for safe species movement throughout Felsted.

<sup>12</sup> Uttlesford District Council (2020): [Essex Coast Recreational disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy Supplementary Planning Document \(SPD\) May 2020](#)

9.2.4 The wider FNPR polices are also anticipated to have an effect on biodiversity. For example, Policy FELREV/ICH1 indicates that new development will be required to include sensitive boundary treatment – retaining existing vegetated boundaries where possible. This is considered likely to safeguard biodiversity connectivity by protecting features that contribute to the biodiversity network. Furthermore, Policy FELREV/CW2 is anticipated to contribute towards biodiversity by protecting and designating a nature area. By safeguarding this area, the FNPR works well to protect diverse flora and fauna.

9.2.5 Overall, **neutral effects** are considered likely in relation to biodiversity. This reflects the reduced biodiversity provision in the Felsted neighbourhood area, and the distance of the site allocations from designated sites and areas for biodiversity, and habitat areas. It is considered that the policy provisions of the FNPR work well to reduce the potential for negative effects, through ensuring biodiversity connectivity is integrated in development proposals. However, it is recommended that Policy FELREV/HN10 is revisited to recognise the partial overlap of the site with the ZOI for the Essex Coast RAMS. This will help to ensure potential adverse effects on the designation linked to the development of the site are mitigated.

## 9.3 Climate change adaptation

9.3.1 A small proportion of the Felsted neighbourhood area is within Flood Zone 2 and Flood Zone 3, and as such is considered to be at risk of fluvial flooding. This risk is concentrated along the course of the River Chelmer on the western edge of the neighbourhood area, and along the River Ter which crosses through the neighbourhood in the central / eastern area in a broadly north to south direction. Surface water flood risk in the Felsted neighbourhood area is largely linked to drainage into these waterbodies, with extensive areas at risk to the north-west of Felsted village, to the south of Watch House Green (draining into the River Ter), and along the roads in the neighbourhood area.

9.3.2 Whilst the site allocated under Policy FELREV/HN9 overlaps with areas of surface water flood risk, the policy makes no stipulations in relation to reducing flood risk or flood effects. Additionally, both sites allocated in the FNPR have the potential to exacerbate flood risk and flood effects on the local road network, given their location adjacent to roads with low to high risk of surface water flooding. Whilst the FNPR does not make stipulations in relation to flood risk and flood effects itself, it is recognised that flood risk and the implementation of sustainable urban drainage systems are managed at the local level by Uttlesford District Council. As such, it is considered that flood risk on this site and across the wider Felsted neighbourhood area is addressed.

9.3.3 Overall, **minor negative effects** are considered likely in relation to climate change adaptation under the FNPR. This is due to the likelihood of development at both sites contributing to flooding on the adjacent roads. However, it is considered that flood risk and flood effects are indirectly addressed through local plan policies.

## 9.4 Climate change mitigation

- 9.4.1 Carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions per capita have been on a downward trend in Uttlesford since 2005; following the same pattern as the East of England, and England as a whole. The largest contributor to emissions in Uttlesford is the transportation sector, which can be linked to Stansted Airport and associated travel to and from the airport.
- 9.4.2 The site allocation policies (Policy FELREV/HN9; and Policy FELREV/HN10) are anticipated to contribute towards reducing carbon emissions originating from the Felsted neighbourhood area. This will be achieved through identifying and promoting opportunities to engage with walking and cycling (active transport), and with public transport (sustainable transport). By encouraging an uptake in such transportation options, the FNPR is anticipated to help reduce emissions linked to the transport sector. However, it is recognised that emissions are likely to increase linked to these site allocations – due to an intensification of the built environment within Felsted.
- 9.4.3 Wider FNPR policies also contribute towards climate change mitigation. This is demonstrated through the focus on promoting an engagement with active and sustainable transport opportunities (Policy FELREV/SC1; and Policy FELREV/HVC1). Furthermore, there is a focus on supporting renewable energy infrastructure within Felsted – including solar panels on existing houses and structures. This is anticipated to help reduce carbon emissions, especially linked to the domestic sector, as activities will be able to be supported by renewable energy and reduce the need to burn fossil fuels.
- 9.4.4 In conclusion, the FNPR works well to reduce carbon emissions within the neighbourhood area. This includes through encouraging an uptake in active and sustainable travel opportunities, to help reduce emissions linked to the transport sector, and supporting the installation of renewable energy infrastructure. Recognising that emissions are likely to increase in Felsted linked to the increase in the built footprint of the neighbourhood area, it is considered that **minor negative effects** are likely overall.

## 9.5 Communities, equality, inclusion and health

- 9.5.1 The FNPR Review Group want to build on the success of the adopted FNP, which secured community benefits alongside additional housing in the form of a purpose-built health centre and a large secure car park. As such, the FNPR has a focus on communities, equality, inclusion and health built into the plan and its policies.
- 9.5.2 The FNPR seeks to bring forward additional housing to meet the identified local need, in line with Policy FELREV/HN1. This is to be met through two site allocations within the neighbourhood area – Sunnybrook Farm II for approximately 17 dwellings, and Land north of Garnetts Lane, Chestnut Walk and Stebbing Road site (also known as the Water Tower site) for approximately 70 dwellings. Both site allocation policies include stipulations relating to the communities, equality, inclusion and health theme. This includes provisions relating to an appropriate housing mix on the sites, ensuring homes are accessible and adaptable, providing safe and appropriate access to the sites, and identifying opportunities to encourage engagement with active travel opportunities (Policy FELREV/HN9; and

Policy FELREV/HN10). This will help to ensure that new development reflects the needs of the community and promotes healthy lifestyles by making walking and cycling a more viable option to access the sites. Additionally, Policy FELREV/HN9 indicates that development will need to be designed to avoid coalescence with Felsted village. This is also considered to be a positive in relation to communities, equality, inclusion and health, as this stipulation will help to keep the distinct communities of the settlements within the Felsted neighbourhood area separate; thus protecting community identity.

- 9.5.3 The wider FNPR policies also seek to support and enhance communities, equality, inclusion and health. There is a focus on maintaining existing infrastructure – as demonstrated through Policy FELREV/VA3, which indicates that financial contributions will be required from developers to mitigate the impact of growth on existing community services and facilities. This policy also sets out community priorities for additional local facilities, which will be provided as a result of new development. As such, this policy works to safeguard existing services and facilities, and enhance the provision through improvements and new infrastructure, which is anticipated to benefit the community in the neighbourhood area.
- 9.5.4 Additionally, there is a focus on school related development in the FNPR – including supporting proposals to expand and improve schools where there would not be an adverse impact on the local road network (Policy FELREV/SC1; and Policy FELREV/SC2). Again, this is anticipated to benefit communities, equality, inclusion and health by ensuring educational facilities are easily accessible in the neighbourhood area, and that development will not lead to negative impacts on health associated with increased air pollutants linked to vehicles undertaking school pick-ups and drop offs.
- 9.5.5 Furthermore, the FNPR has a focus on employment provision in the neighbourhood area. Policy FELREV/ERO1 indicates that development that creates local employment, or diversifies the rural economy, will be supported. This is anticipated to help communities, equality, inclusion and health by ensuring residents have good access to employment opportunities.
- 9.5.6 Overall, the FNPR performs well in relation to the communities, equality, inclusion and health SEA theme. It demonstrates an understanding of what the community needs in relation to housing, by seeking to bring forward appropriate housing types and tenures to help keep the community cohesive and vibrant. This is supported by the wider FNPR policies, which seek to maintain and enhance the infrastructure provision within the Felsted neighbourhood area. As such, **significant positive effects** are concluded most likely.

## 9.6 Historic environment

- 9.6.1 The historic environment is a key consideration locally, given the heritage value and sensitivity of the neighbourhood area – linked to the 191 listed buildings and the Felsted Conservation Area.
- 9.6.2 The consideration of the historic environment is reflected in the spatial strategy of the FNPR. Neither allocated site contains or is within proximity to designated heritage assets, areas or features, and as such it is considered

that their development will not result in negative effects to designations, their wider setting, nor their significance. Furthermore, it is noted that the site allocation policies work well to reduce negative impacts of development within the wider historic landscape of Felsted. This will be achieved through ensuring development is designed and landscaped to enhance the character and appearance of the area (Policy FELREV/HN9; and Policy FELREV/HN10).

9.6.3 The FNPR includes a specific heritage focused policy, to help reduce the impact of development on the historic environment, and to help enhance it. Policy FELREV/HVC1 recognises the importance of the village centre to the historic environment, given its designation as a historic character area. As such, development proposals within the historic village centre will need to ensure growth will integrate with existing structure (for example, through the choice of materials used and the form of development selected). This is anticipated to help reduce negative visual effects which could impact upon historic setting and significance.

9.6.4 The wider FNPR policies also include considerations that are likely to benefit the historic environment in the neighbourhood area. This is largely focused on ensuring new development respects the character and appearance of the neighbourhood area and does not impact upon heritage assets (Policy FELREV/SC1; Policy FELREV/ICH2; and Policy FELREV/CW1). It also includes the focus on high quality design – including the need to sustain, reinforce and / or enhance Felsted's character, as described in the Felsted Heritage and Character Assessment (Policy FELREV/ICH1).

9.6.5 It is noted that the developer for the Garnetts Lane site have referenced a haul route for the site, which is not included within the planning application. The inclusion of a haul route during development stages would help to ensure that the value and vulnerability of the historic environment in Felsted is not adversely impacted, for example through reducing vibrational and noise impacts, as well as visual impacts. As such, a recommendation is made to include reference to a haul route in Policy FELREV/HN10, to ensure it is part of the design process.

9.6.6 Overall, **neutral to minor positive effects** are considered likely in relation to the historic environment. This is due to the focus of site allocations away from designated heritage assets, and the focus of the plan policies on encouraging high quality design. This will help to reduce the impact of new development and infrastructure on heritage assets, their settings and their significance.

## 9.7 Land, soil and resources

9.7.1 A key consideration relating to the land, soil and resources theme is the avoidance of development coming forward on best and most versatile (BMV) agricultural land. The majority of the Felsted neighbourhood area is underlain with Grade 2 provisional agricultural quality land, and as such any level of development is likely to result in the loss of some land that could support agricultural activity. However, the FNPR works well in this respect, by focusing growth on two site allocations that are located adjacent to existing development (Policy FELREV/HN9; and Policy FELREV/HN10). This is anticipated to help reduce the amount of loss of potential agricultural

quality land, as development would not be coming forward in the more open countryside areas within Felsted.

9.7.2 Another consideration is water quality. There are two monitored waterbodies within the Felsted neighbourhood area, both classified as having a moderate water status. It is anticipated that water sources and their quality will be managed by Affinity Water and Anglian Water, and their associated Water Resources Management Plans.

9.7.3 Whilst there are no specific policies relating to land, soil and resources, the FNPR does make provisions for this theme. This includes through ensuring that major developments contribute financially towards essential infrastructure, including waste services (Policy FELREV/VA3). This is of benefit, as it will help to prevent the pollution of soils and water in the neighbourhood area linked to new growth. Additionally, policies that include the need to protect and enhance green infrastructure (for example, through vegetated boundaries, through protecting / preventing development in open gaps, and defining a nature area) are likely to have a benefit, through potentially safeguarding underlying soils (Policy FELREV/HN9; Policy FEL/HN10; Policy FELREV/ICH4; and Policy FELREV/CW2).

9.7.4 Overall, **minor negative effects** are considered likely in relation to the land, soil and resources theme. This reflects the anticipated loss of Grade 2 provisional agricultural quality land, for which there is no mitigation. The spatial strategy of the FNPR works to reduce the impact of this loss of productive agricultural land by focusing growth adjacent to existing development. Furthermore, the wider policies within the FNPR work to safeguard a level of soil resources, and protect land and soil resources from pollution.

## 9.8 Landscape

9.8.1 The Felsted neighbourhood area sits wholly within the South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland National Character Area. Additionally, on a local level, the Felsted neighbourhood area sits within two landscape character types: the Upper Chelmer River Valley, and the Felsted Farmland Plateau. The overlap with this national landscape character area and the local landscape character types lends to the overarching character of the neighbourhood area.

9.8.2 Furthermore, the Felsted Heritage and Character Assessment 2017 divides the neighbourhood area into five distinct character areas: Felsted Arable Farmland, Felsted Village, Felsted Rural Greens, Felsted Rural Hamlets, and Southern River Valleys. Each of these character areas has a number of unique features, issues and opportunities, which should be fully considered through development proposals. This is reiterated through Policy FELREV/CW1, which indicates that development proposals must protect and enhance the landscape of the character area they are in as identified in the Felsted Heritage and Character Assessment 2017.

9.8.3 The site allocation policies make provisions for the landscape – indicating that development proposals will need to be designed and landscaped so that they enhance the character and appearance of the area, and fit with the character areas identified in the 2017 assessment (Policy FELREV/HN9; and

Policy FELREV/HN10). This will help to ensure development is in keeping with the surrounding character of the sites, and does not detract from views. Additionally, Policy FELREV/HN9 indicates that a landscaping plan will need to be delivered alongside the development proposal. This is to ensure that growth on the Sunnybrook Farm II site is visually screened from existing development within proximity to the site, and helps to reduce the potential for coalescence between the site and Felsted village – which could result in sprawl-like effects into the open countryside.

9.8.4 The FNPR includes landscape specific policies to help ensure development maintains and enhances landscape character and quality in the neighbourhood area. This includes through providing high quality design stipulations, such as ensuring new development remains locally distinctive through the use of materials, height, scale and layout (Policy FELREV/ICH1). It also includes through ensuring that coalescence is avoided in the neighbourhood area – by protecting specific gaps in the landscape to prevent built areas combining and resulting in sprawl-like effects (Policy FELREV/ICH4). It is anticipated that these landscape specific policies will help to reduce adverse negative impacts of new development in the neighbourhood area, by ensuring new development blends with the existing built footprint of the neighbourhood area, and does not negatively impact upon views and vistas, through design or through the location of growth.

9.8.5 There are also provisions within the wider policies that relate to landscape. This includes ensuring supporting infrastructure respects the character and appearance of the local area (Policy FELREV/SC1; Policy FELREV/ERO1; and Policy FELREV/ICH2), maintaining and enhancing important views and vistas (Policy FELREV/SC2). This is anticipated to benefit landscape character and quality by ensuring important aspects of character are maintained and enhanced.

9.8.6 It is also noted that the developer for the Garnetts Lane site have referenced a haul route for the site, which is not included within the planning application. The inclusion of a haul route during development stages would help to ensure that the value and vulnerability of the landscape in Felsted is not adversely impacted, for example through reducing visual impacts to important and characteristic views. As such, a recommendation is made to include reference to a haul route in Policy FELREV/HN10, to ensure it is part of the design process.

9.8.7 Overall, **neutral to minor negative effects** are anticipated in relation to the landscape. This is due to the potential for development to impact upon the character and quality of the landscape in Felsted, for example through increasing the built footprint in the neighbourhood area, and impacting upon views. However, it is noted that the policy stipulations work well to mitigate against any adverse effects, and that FNPR has a clear focus on enhancing the landscape in line with the Felsted Heritage and Character Assessment 2017.

## 9.9 Transport and accessibility

9.9.1 The Felsted neighbourhood area has a relatively limited level of sustainable transport opportunities. Whilst there are two bus routes through the

neighbourhood area, data shows that bus usage for work commuting is significantly lower than the district and national average. Additionally, the nearest train station is located approximately 5.3km to the east of Felsted. As such, travel is largely facilitated through private vehicles – which have led to experienced traffic issues, especially congestion relating to school drop offs in the morning and pickups in the afternoon.

9.9.2 New development has the potential to exacerbate experienced traffic-related issues in the neighbourhood area, and potentially lead to new ones. To help mitigate potential impacts of new development on the transport system in Felsted, the site allocation policies include transport-related stipulations. For example, Policy FELREV/HN9 indicates that development of the Sunnybrook Farm site will need to provide wide vehicular access to Braintree Road, with off-street parking spaces, and identify and promote opportunities to pursue active travel opportunities and engage with sustainable transport opportunities. This will help to reduce congestion linked to additional vehicles travelling and parking on the local road network. Similarly, Policy FELREV/HN10 indicates that development on the Land north of Garnetts Lane, Chestnut Walk and Stebbing Road site will be subject to a transport statement / assessment, and will be required to identify, promote and facilitate opportunities and engagement with active and sustainable travel opportunities. Again, it is anticipated this will help to reduce congestion and traffic related issues by providing viable alternatives to private vehicles for local journeys.

9.9.3 Whilst the FNPR does not include specific policies relating to transportation and accessibility, the wider policies are considered likely to contribute a level of mitigating effects. For example, this includes through ensuring development provides financial contributions to the highways network (Policy FELREV/VA3), provides additional car parking provision (Policy FELREV/VA3; Policy FELREV/SC1; and Policy FELREV/HVC1), encourages active and sustainable transportation uptake (Policy FELREV/SC1; Policy FELREV/SC2; and Policy FELREV/HVC1) and ensures it does not cause severe traffic congestion (Policy FELREV/HVC1).

9.9.4 Overall, **minor negative effects** are anticipated in relation to transportation and accessibility through the FNPR policies. This is largely due to the inevitable increase in private vehicles on the local road network, linked to additional growth in the neighbourhood area and the low sustainable transport provision. The spatial strategy works well to reduce impacts by ensuring opportunities to engage with sustainable and active travel come forward with new residential development, which could help reduce the number of private vehicles on the local road network for local journeys. There is also a focus within the spatial strategy and across the wider plan policies on providing adequate car parking (to reduce the number of parked vehicles on the street, which could help relieve congestion issues), as well as providing financial contributions towards bettering the local highways network.

## 9.10 Conclusions and recommendations

### Conclusions

- 9.10.1 Significant positive effects are considered likely in relation to the communities, equality, inclusion and health SEA theme. This is due to the FNDP policies reflecting the community needs within Felsted; ensuring housing types and tenures are appropriate, and maintaining and enhancing infrastructure provision within the neighbourhood area.
- 9.10.2 Neutral to minor positive effects are anticipated for the historic environment. This reflects the focus on high quality design within the FNPR policies, which is considered to help reduce the impact of development on heritage assets, areas and features – and their associated settings and significance.
- 9.10.3 Neutral effects are considered likely in relation to biodiversity, which largely reflects the limited biodiversity provision in the neighbourhood area and the allocation of sites away from biodiversity designations and habitats. This conclusion also reflects the policy provisions, which work well to reduce any adverse effects to biodiversity linked to new development.
- 9.10.4 Neutral to minor negative effects are anticipated for landscape through the FNPR. This reflects the potential for development to impact upon the character and quality of the landscape in Felsted, and the policy provisions in place to mitigate against any adverse effects.
- 9.10.5 Minor negative effects are considered likely in relation to climate change adaptation. This conclusion reflects the likelihood of flooding on both allocated sites, and the likelihood that flood risk and effects are addressed through Local Plan policies.
- 9.10.6 Minor negative effects are also anticipated in relation to climate change mitigation. This recognises that carbon and greenhouse gas emissions are likely to increase due to the increase in the built footprint of Felsted, and reflects the policy provisions that seek to reduce emissions linked to the transport sector.
- 9.10.7 Minor negative effects are further anticipated for the land, soil and resources theme. This conclusion is reached based on the anticipated loss of productive agricultural soils through the site allocations, which cannot be mitigated. However, it is noted that the policy provisions of the FNPR work to safeguard a level of soil resources through design stipulations.
- 9.10.8 Minor negative effects are also concluded likely for transportation and accessibility. This reflects the inevitable increase in private vehicles on the local road network, linked to additional growth in the neighbourhood area and the low sustainable transport provision. This conclusion also reflects the focus of the plan policies on encouraging engagement with active and sustainable transportation opportunities.

## Recommendations

9.10.9 It is recommended that Policy FELREV/HN10 is revisited to recognise the partial overlap of the site with the Zone of Influence for the Essex Coast RAMS. This will help to ensure potential adverse effects on the designation linked to the development of the site are mitigated.

9.10.10 It is further recommended that a reference to a haul route is made within Policy FELREV/HN10, to ensure it is part of the design process. This will help reduce the impacts of the development stages of the site to the historic environment and the landscape of Felsted.

## Part 3: What are the next steps?

## 10. Plan finalisation

- 10.1.1 This Environmental Report accompanies the FNPR for Regulation 14 consultation.
- 10.1.2 Following consultation, any representations made will be considered by the FNPR Review Group, and the FNPR and the Environmental Report will be updated as necessary. The updated Environmental Report will then accompany the FNPR for submission to the Local Planning Authority, Uttlesford District Council, for subsequent Independent Examination. At Independent Examination, the FNPR will be considered in terms of whether it meets the Basic Conditions for Neighbourhood Plans and is in general conformity with the Local Plan.
- 10.1.3 Assuming that the examination leads to a favourable outcome, the FNPR will then be subject to a referendum, organised by Uttlesford District Council. If more than 50% of those who vote agree with the FNPR, it will then be 'made'. Once 'made', the FNPR will become part of the Development Plan for Uttlesford District Council, covering the defined neighbourhood area.

# 11. Monitoring

- 11.1.1 The SEA regulations require 'measures envisaged concerning monitoring' to be outlined in this report. This refers to the monitoring of likely significant effects of the Neighbourhood Plan to identify any unforeseen effects early and take remedial action as appropriate.
- 11.1.2 It is anticipated that monitoring of effects of the Neighbourhood Plan will be primarily undertaken by Uttlesford District Council as part of the process of preparing its Annual Monitoring Report (AMR). However, monitoring will be revisited in subsequent stages, considering feedback from consultation and finalisation of the FNPR.

# Appendix A Regulatory requirements

As discussed in **Chapter 1** above, Schedule 2 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans Regulations 2004 (the Regulations) explains the information that must be contained in the Environmental Report; however, interpretation of Schedule 2 is not straightforward. **Table A.1** links the structure of this report to an interpretation of Schedule 2 requirements, whilst **Table A.2** explains this interpretation. **Table A.3** identifies how and where within the Environmental Report the regulatory requirements have/ will be met.

As discussed in **Chapter 1** above, Schedule 2 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans Regulations 2004 (the Regulations) explains the information that must be contained in the Environmental Report; however, interpretation of Schedule 2 is not straightforward. **Table A.1** overleaf links the structure of this report to an interpretation of Schedule 2 requirements, whilst **Table A.2** explains this interpretation. **Table A.3** identifies how and where within the Environmental Report the regulatory requirements have/ will be met.

**Table A.1: Questions answered by this report, in-line with an interpretation of regulatory requirements**

Questions answered		As per regulations, the report must include...
Introduction	What's the plan seeking to achieve?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes</li> </ul>
	What's the sustainability 'context'?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Relevant environmental protection objectives, established at international or national level</li> <li>Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance</li> </ul>
	What's the sustainability 'baseline'?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan</li> <li>The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be affected</li> <li>Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance</li> </ul>
	What are the key issues and objectives that should be a focus?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Key environmental problems / issues and objectives that should be a focus of (i.e. provide a 'framework' for) assessment</li> </ul>
Part 1	What has plan-making / SEA involved up to this point?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Outline reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with (and thus an explanation of the 'reasonableness' of the approach)</li> <li>The likely significant effects associated with alternatives</li> <li>Outline reasons for selecting the preferred approach in-light of alternatives assessment / a description of how environmental objectives and considerations are reflected in the draft plan</li> </ul>

Questions answered		As per regulations, the report must include...
<b>Part 2</b>	What are the SEA findings at this current stage?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ The likely significant effects associated with the draft plan</li><li>▪ The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and offset any significant adverse effects of implementing the 'pre-submission' version of the plan</li></ul>
<b>Part 3</b>	What happens next?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ A description of the monitoring measures envisaged</li></ul>

**Table A.2: Interpretation of the regulations**

<b>Schedule 2</b>	<b>Interpretation of Schedule 2</b>		
<b>The report must include...</b>	<b>The report must include...</b>		
(a) an outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes;	An outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes	i.e. answer - <i>What's the plan seeking to achieve?</i>	
(b) the relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan	Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance	i.e. answer - <i>What's the 'context'?</i>	
(c) the environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected;	The relevant environmental protection objectives, established at international or national level	i.e. answer - <i>What's the 'baseline'?</i>	i.e. answer - <i>What's the scope of the SA?</i>
(d) any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan or programme including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance, such as areas designated pursuant to Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC;	The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan'		
(e) the environmental protection objectives, established at international, Community or Member State level, which are relevant to the plan and the way those objectives and any environmental considerations have been taken into account during its preparation;	The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected	i.e. answer - <i>What's the 'baseline'?</i>	i.e. answer - <i>What are the key issues &amp; objectives?</i>
(f) the likely significant effects on the environment including on issues such as biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors;	Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance		
(g) the measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the plan;	Key environmental problems / issues and objectives that should be a focus of appraisal	i.e. answer - <i>What are the key issues &amp; objectives?</i>	
(h) an outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with and a description of how the assessment was undertaken including any difficulties (such as technical deficiencies or lack of know-how) encountered in compiling the required information	An outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with (i.e. an explanation of the 'reasonableness of the approach)	i.e. answer - <i>What has Plan-making / SA involved up to this point?</i>	[Part 1 of the Report]
(i) a description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring.	The likely significant effects associated with the draft plan  The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects of implementing the draft plan	i.e. answer - <i>What are the assessment findings at this current stage?</i>	[Part 2 of the Report]
	A description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring	i.e. answer - <i>What happens next?</i>	[Part 3 of the Report]

**Table A.3: 'Checklist' of how (throughout the SEA process) and where (within this report) regulatory requirements are met**

Regulatory requirement	Discussion of how requirement is met
<b>A) The Environmental Report must present certain information</b>	
1. An outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan or programme, and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes;	Chapter 2 presents this information.
2. The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan or programme;	These matters have been considered in detail through scoping work, which has involved dedicated consultation on a Scoping Report.  The 'SEA framework' – the outcome of scoping – is presented within Appendix B alongside key issues and scoping consultation responses.
3. The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected;	
4. Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan or programme including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance, such as areas designated pursuant to Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC.;	
5. The environmental protection, objectives, established at international, Community or national level, which are relevant to the plan or programme and the way those objectives and any environmental, considerations have been taken into account during its preparation;	The SEA framework is presented within Appendix B. Appendix B also presents key issues identified through scoping.  With regards to explaining " <i>how...considerations have been taken into account</i> ", Chapter 5 explains how alternatives have been considered.
6. The likely significant effects on the environment, including on issues such as biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors. (Footnote: These effects should include secondary, cumulative, synergistic, short, medium and long-term permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects);	Chapter 5 explains how alternatives have been considered.  Chapter 8 presents an assessment of the 'pre-submission' version of the plan.  With regards to assessment methodology, Chapter 8 explains the role of the SEA framework/scope, and the need to consider the potential for various effect characteristics/dimensions.
7. The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the plan or programme;	The assessment highlights certain tensions between competing objectives, which might potentially be actioned when finalising the plan, and specific recommendations are made in Chapter 9.

Regulatory requirement	Discussion of how requirement is met
8. An outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with, and a description of how the assessment was undertaken including any difficulties (such as technical deficiencies or lack of know-how) encountered in compiling the required information;	Chapter 5 explains how alternatives have been considered.
9. Description of measures envisaged concerning monitoring in accordance with Art. 10;	Chapter 10 presents measures envisaged concerning monitoring.
10. A non-technical summary of the information provided under the above headings	The NTS is provided at the beginning of this Environmental Report.

**B) The Report must be published for consultation alongside the draft plan**

Authorities with environmental responsibility and the public, shall be given an early and effective opportunity within appropriate time frames to express their opinion on the Draft Plan or programme and the accompanying environmental report before the adoption of the plan or programme (Art. 6.1, 6.2)

This Environmental Report is being published alongside the draft version of the FNPR for Regulation 14 consultation.

**C) The report must be taken into account, alongside consultation responses, when finalising the plan**

The environmental report prepared pursuant to Article 5, the opinions expressed pursuant to Article 6 and the results of any transboundary consultations entered into pursuant to Article 7 shall be taken into account during the preparation of the plan or programme and before its adoption or submission to the legislative procedure.

This Environmental Report, and consultation responses received, have been taken into account whilst finalising the plan.

